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ABSTRACT

In February 1994, a study was conducted by Macomb Community College (MCC), in Michigan, to determine the extent to which the training received by MCC graduates met the needs of area employers. In conjunction with a follow-up study of MCC completers from 1992-93, respondents were requested to complete release of information forms for their employers. Completed forms were received from 427 respondents, and questionnaires were mailed to the companies or supervisors identified on the forms. Study findings, based on an analysis of the forms and responses from 253 employers, included the following: (1) the most common types of employment identified by graduates were the service (44%) and manufacturing sectors (18%), while 55% of the jobs were in Macomb County; (2) the 241 employers who responded to the question gave a mean rating of 4.37 out of 5 points to the training received by the MCC graduates, the highest rating in 6 years; (3) the employee characteristic or skill rated the highest by respondents was willingness to learn (4.61 out of 5), while problem-solving skills (4.18) and mathematical skills (4.16) were the lowest rated; (4) with respect to the future job outlook in the area, employers in six out of nine industries saw future jobs as less available than they are today, while employers in the areas of wholesale trade, services, and construction were generally optimistic about future jobs. The survey instrument and cover letter are appended. (KP)

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ED 369 472

Macomb Community College

EMPLOYER FOLLOW UP SURVEY

February-March, 1994

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JC 940 308

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EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP SURVEY
Macomb Community College
February-March, 1994

INTRODUCTION

Some information for Macomb Community College's annual Employer Follow-Up Study is gathered from responses to the College's Grad 1 survey. The Grad 1 survey this year (class of '92-93, R&E Project 93-051) was conducted by mail for the first time in several years. In an effort to improve data collection about respondents' employers and thus, to improve our Employer Follow-Up Survey, we initiated a different procedure along with the change from phone to mail. This new procedure will be discussed under Methodology.

Although the primary purpose of the Employer Follow-Up Survey is to determine how well MCC prepares its graduates and/or certificate holders for the work place, it is beneficial to know more about the employers themselves. That information is presented under General Information.

METHODOLOGY

Each year, as part of its graduate follow-up studies, the Department of Research & Evaluation conducts an Employer Follow-Up Survey to determine how well the training received by Macomb graduates meets the employers' needs.

For this year's survey, we asked Grad 1 respondents to complete and sign a consent to release information form for employers (Appendix A). More than 400 respondents (N=427) returned signed consent forms identifying their employers. This represents a **20% increase** over employer information provided by last year's Grad 1 respondents.

Early in February, these authorization forms were sent with a cover letter (Appendix B) signed by the project director and a copy of the Employer Follow-Up Survey (Appendix C) to 427 companies or supervisors named on the authorization form. A second mailing went out approximately 10 days after the first.

The results of the Employer Follow-Up Survey are presented below.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Employers identified by respondents to our Grad 1 Survey this year represent, among others, the services industry (44%) and the manufacturing industry (18%). These numbers correlate with declines in manufacturing jobs in the County (a 9% drop from 1979 to 1989) and increases in service jobs (a 70% increase between 1979 and 1989).

These employers--who did not all respond to the survey--have been grouped according to Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes in order to determine the types of industries that employ our graduates. The appropriate SIC codes are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. GRAD 1 RESPONDENTS' EMPLOYERS BY SIC (N=427)

Div	Description	N	%
A.	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	10	2.5%
B.	Mining	--	---
C.	Construction	12	3.3%
D.	Manufacturing	75	17.6%
E.	Transportation, communications, electric, gas, and sanitary services	16	3.7%
F.	Wholesale Trade	14	3.3%
G.	Retail Trade	41	9.6%
H.	Finance, Insurance and real estate	28	6.7%
I.	Services	188	43.1%
J.	Public administration	28	6.6%
K.	Unclassifiable (3 military, 12 employer industry unknown)	15	3.5%

Among the employers identified by respondents to the Grad 1 survey, 235 (55.0%) were located in Macomb County; 110 (25.8%) in Oakland County, and 61 (14.3%) in Wayne County. Thirteen employers (3.0%) were located outside the tri-county area, and eight (1.9%) were out-of-state.

The top ten industries in Macomb County are listed in Table 2 below which presents their ranking in 1979, 1989, and as named in 1994 by Macomb's Grad 1 respondents. The industries listed are subcategories of the divisions cited in Table 1. Remaining Macomb County employers (142) mentioned by graduates are in other subcategories.

Unfortunately, we do not have previous data from employers or employer surveys to determine what types of industry they represented. However, we know Macomb County is "experiencing an ongoing shift where manufacturing is losing ground and being replaced by service sector jobs."[1] This is illustrated by the rise of health services from fifth place to fourth place in the top 10 county industries and first place for employers of Grad 1 respondents. Likewise, the addition of business services as sixth among ten in 1989 is indicative of service growth..

[1]"The Macomb County Economy: Industrial Suburb in Transition," Bellwether Report Book IV, 1993.

TABLE 2. MACOMB COUNTY'S TOP 10 EMPLOYING INDUSTRIES[2]

Industry	Position 1979	%	Position 1989	%	Rank Grads	MCC G1 %[3]
Transportation Equip	1st	12.8	1st	8.2	2nd	9.4
Industrial Machinery	2nd	8.6	5th	6.9	9th/tie	.4
Fabricated Metal	3rd	7.9	3rd	7.5	7th	1.3
Eating/Drink Places	4th	6.1	2nd	6.7	4th	2.6
Health Services	5th	5.5	4th	7.0	1st	15.7
General Merchandise	6th	2.9	N/A	---	5th/tie	2.1
Business Services	N/A	---	6th	4.1	6th	1.7
Special trade (Const)	7th	2.7	7th	3.3	8th	1.2
Food stores	8th	2.7	8th	3.3	9th	.4
Rubber/Plastic products	N/A	---	9th	3.1	---	---
Auto dealer/ service station	9th	2.6	N/A	---	3rd	6.8
Wholesale trade	10th	2.6	10th	3.1	5th/tie	2.1

As indicated previously, 55% of our Grad 1 respondents who supplied employer information are employed within Macomb County. In addition, the information from Grad 1 respondents clearly shows that the majority work for an employer in a service industry (see Table 1)--whether in Macomb County or elsewhere.

RESPONSE RATES

Response rates improved this year, both in the number of employers identified and the number of employers responding to this survey. However, it is important to note that no employer answered every question.

Last year, 193 (54%) of employers identified by graduates returned completed surveys; this year, 253 of those identified (59%) returned completed surveys. Furthermore, names and addresses provided on the consent forms appeared to be more complete than those received in prior Grad 1 telephone survey responses. In addition, another 18 employers returned the questionnaire indicating it was against company policy to provide any information which could be construed as an employee evaluation and 5 rejected for other reasons (employee left, etc.)

Historically, the number of employers refusing to answer for

[2]Bellwether IV, p.7

[3]Concerns only those employers located in Macomb County (55% of employers named by Grad 1 respondents).

various reasons has declined from a high of 78 in 1991 (see Table 3) to 18 in 1993 and 1994 (a 77% decrease). These refusals are in addition to a list of 197 companies which had previously refused to participate in the survey, indicating it was against their policy, and whose names previously were automatically stricken from future attempts.

TABLE 3. EMPLOYER NON-RESPONSE RATIONALE

Reason	Year of Survey 1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Refused, against policy	NA	78	25	18	18
No longer employed	NA	-	-	2	2
Other	NA	5	5	3	3

Ironically, some employers indicated that the individual never worked for the company ("Other" in Table 3). The time lapse between receipt of graduate information in late fall and mailing of the employer survey in late winter may help explain why a few were returned indicating "no longer employed."

This year, because we had written approval from the graduate and more complete addresses, we decided to send the survey to all employers, even if they were on the "do not send" list. This decision proved to be quite successful: 27 employers who were on the "do not send" list responded, and they represented 71 employees. This group alone accounts for 28% of responses to the Employer Follow-Up Survey. Whether the increase is solely attributable to the consent form is uncertain although we tend to believe this is the case. Certainly more accurate addresses--especially for the Big 3 automotive companies--is a major factor. Response rates by SIC are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. EMPLOYER RESPONDENTS BY SIC (N=253)

Div	Description	#	%
A.	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	6	2.3%
B.	Mining	--	--
C.	Construction	11	4.3
D.	Manufacturing	44	17.4
E.	Transportation, communications, electric, gas, and sanitary services	9	3.6
F.	Wholesale Trade	8	3.2
G.	Retail Trade	23	9.1
H.	Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	18	7.1
I.	Services	111	43.9
J.	Public administration	17	6.7
K.	Not Classifiable	5	2.0

The proportion of respondents by SIC was quite similar to the proportion of employers by SIC who were identified by Grad 1 respondents (see Table 1). Very slight differences appeared in Finance, Services, Public Administration, and Construction.

OVERALL TRAINING OF MCC GRADS

Based on answers from 241 of the respondents (95%), employers gave a 4.37 mean to the overall rating of the training received by 1992-93 MCC graduates who were employed by the respondents. High was 5.00 (very good), and low was 1.00 (very poor). This is the highest overall rating in six years as indicated in Table 5.

TABLE 5
OVERALL TRAINING SCORES BY EMPLOYERS OF 1992-93 GRADUATES

Year of survey	# Resp.	Mean Score
1989	204	4.29
1990	319	4.28
1991	303	4.30
1992	225	4.27
1993	192	4.29
1994	**253 (241 ans this q)**	**4.37**

Table 6 presents longitudinal data on the sixteen characteristics or abilities employers were asked to rate. These items were rated by 85% to 97% of employers. The characteristics are presented in descending order, based on mean scores from this current survey. Again, 5 was high (very good) and 1 was low (very poor), although no employer rated his/her employee very poor in any category.

TABLE 6
EMPLOYERS' MEAN SCORES 1990-1994 ON CHARACTERISTICS OF GRADUATES

Characteristic/Skill	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Willingness to learn	4.55	4.56	4.57	4.54	4.61
Cooperation with management	4.46	4.53	4.45	4.47	4.52
Accepting responsibility	4.45	4.45	4.46	4.46	4.50
Cooperation with co-workers	4.42	4.48	4.42	4.36	4.45
Operation of equipment	4.36	4.40	4.35	4.39	4.43
Attitude toward work	4.38	4.43	4.39	4.31	4.41
Following instructions	4.29	4.37	4.35	4.33	4.41
Personal initiative	4.35	4.35	4.34	4.29	4.40

(Table 6 continued on next page)

Table 6 continued.

Characteristic/Skill	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Quality of work	4.37	4.40	4.33	4.41	4.37
Meeting the public	4.13	4.28	4.13	4.19	4.30
Quantity of work	4.27	4.25	4.18	4.25	4.29
Ability to organize	4.10	4.14	4.14	4.12	4.26
Technical knowledge	4.13	4.16	4.16	4.15	4.22
Communications skills	4.03	4.18	4.07	4.03	4.20
Problem-solving skills	4.01	4.13	4.06	4.06	4.18
Mathematical skills	4.06	4.10	4.13	4.10	4.16

All categories except one (quality of work) have greater means this year than last. Four areas have consistently received the lowest ratings: technical knowledge, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and mathematical skills. A fifth area (ability to organize) was also among the lowest-rated skills, but it received a dramatic increase in the mean this year from 4.12 to 4.26.

The areas mentioned above are the same ones identified by the American Society for Training and Development in a study conducted with the U. S. Department of Labor (Carnevale et al, 1988) on "Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want." The writers suggest that good "Business strategies...demand teamwork, listening skills, the ability to set goals, creativity, and problem-solving skills." While employer ratings of the aforementioned skills are historically the lowest of the 16 being evaluated, they are still well above average on a scale of 1 to 5.

JOB OUTLOOK

Present and future job outlooks are up some what from last year, but not nearly as high as they were in the first years of this decade. Actual ratings from this year's respondents are shown in Table 7. Longitudinal means are presented in Table 8. However, this information is provided from the employer's outlook on his/her particular field which is not necessarily the graduate's program of study.

TABLE 7
RESPONDENTS' ACTUAL RATINGS OF PRESENT/FUTURE JOB OUTLOOK

Rating	Present	Future
Very Poor (1 point)	--	1
Poor (2 points)	5	4
Average (3 points)	43	43
Good (4 points)	99	112
Very Good (5 points)	98	84
Mean rating	4.18	4.12

TABLE 8. 5 YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON PRESENT/FUTURE JOB OUTLOOK
(Mean Scores)

YEAR	PRESENT	FUTURE
1990	4.28	4.29
1991	4.30	4.19
1992	4.00	4.11
1993	4.06	4.02
1994	4.18	4.12

A breakdown by industry and/or ranking proves somewhat more informative. While 3 out of the last 5 surveys have revealed some pessimism about future jobs, employers in six of nine industries ("not classifiable" is excluded) also see future jobs as somewhat less available than they are today. The exceptions are in wholesale trade, services, and construction. Comparisons are shown in Table 9.

It is important to distinguish between "Transportation" and "Manufacturing", as defined in the Standard Industrial Classification Manual (1987) lest the reader confuse the upturn in the automobile industry in Detroit with ratings in those two classifications. Indeed, fifteen of the respondents in Manufacturing are manufacturers of transportation equipment (trucks and cars); another three (fabricated metal) may be indirectly involved. However, "transportation" relates to actual movement of goods via highway trucking, rail, etc., rather than "automobile industry."

TABLE 9. JOB OUTLOOK BY RESPONDENTS' SIC

SIC[4]	Today	Future	Difference
Transportation	4.44	4.33	-.11 pt
Wholesale trade	4.38	4.50	+.12
Retail trade	4.35	4.22	-.13
Manufacturing	4.30	4.23	-.07
Services	4.20	4.13	+.07
Agriculture[5]	4.17	4.00	-.17
Public administration	4.00	3.94	-.06
Finance	3.88	3.76	-.12
Construction	3.82	4.00	+.18

Only in some instances to employers' and graduates' opinions coincide about job availability today and in the future. Cross-tabs of their ratings reveal that only in 79 instances do graduates and employers agree about job availability today, e.g., 12 graduates and 12 employers all rated today's job availability fair; and in 73 instances, they agree about future job availability.

One possible explanation to be considered is any disparity between the graduate's program at MCC and the employer's field. Another might be a graduate's perception of the job market in view of his/her success in obtaining employment--dream vs. reality. Employers' perceptions are likely based on their experience in hiring qualified employees, sales volume, industry studies, etc.

VERBATIM COMMENTS

In general, more than sixty employers offered comments on their surveys. The majority of comments related to the same areas that received lower ratings: technical knowledge, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and mathematical skills. Twenty-two employers commented on improving communication, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills; another 12 suggested topics that inter-relate but might be considered for new courses. Four commented on computer needs--either experience with software or more modern systems or confidence in operating computers. Two employers suggested emphasizing diversity in the workplace, either as a seminar or course content. Nearly 20 employers cited miscellaneous topics ranging from their willingness and anxiousness to hire more MCC graduates to a perceived need for extended information about insurance processing. The latter even offered to provide the

[4]See complete descriptions in Table 1.

[5]83% of these respondents were veterinary clinics; remaining 17% were agriculture products, e.g., farmers' elevator.

instruction. Finally, nine employers issued kudos about Macomb in general, their employees specifically, and the training provided at this institution.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

November 1993

I hereby give my permission for the Department of Research and Evaluation at Macomb Community College (MCC) to contact my employer, as identified below, relative to the relationship between my education at MCC and my current employment. I understand that information collected from my employer by MCC is not to be considered an evaluation of my performance as an employee but serves only to enable MCC to complete research involving me as an MCC graduate or certificate holder.

No information concerning me as an individual will be released by the College or its Department of Research and Evaluation to any third party or outside agency.

This authorization expires on March 15, 1994. For information concerning this study, please call (313) 445-7863, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Please **sign** your name. _____

Please **print** your name._____

My current employer is:

(1) Company Name/Division_____

(2) Supervisor's name_____

(3) Supervisor's title_____

(4) Address_____

(5) City_____

(6) State_____(7) ZIP Code_____

14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, Michigan 48093-3896 (313) 445-7999

APPENDIX B

Macomb Community College

February 4, 1994

Dear Employer:

Each year the Department of Research & Evaluation at Macomb Community College conducts follow-up studies of its graduates. Part of that follow-up includes contact with first-year graduates' employers regarding the graduate's training at Macomb. This information helps us evaluate our programs and their content, thus helping us meet the needs, not only of our students, but of the business community as well.

This year, for the first time, we have asked graduate respondents to complete a consent form authorizing release of pertinent information. **The signed consent form is enclosed. Your employee is identified by name and social security number on the inside label.** You will notice the consent form expires in March, so we would appreciate your completed survey **by February 18.** A business reply envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

All information is confidential, i.e., neither the employer nor graduate/employee is released. Only statistical information is provided in our report.

If you have any questions about the survey, please call me during business hours at 445-7817.

Sincerely,

Judith Adams
Dept. of Research & Evaluation
Project Director

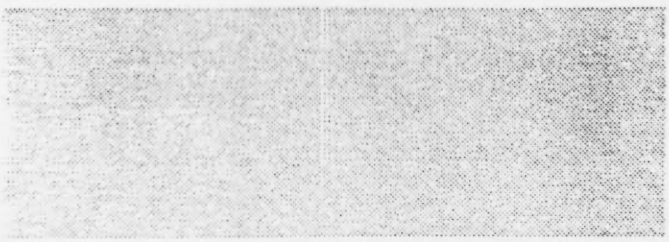
ja
Enclosures

14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, Michigan 48093-3896 (313) 445-7999

Macomb Community College

FOLLOW-UP WITH EMPLOYERS OF GRADUATES

EMP MiSIS



Please rate the training received by the MCC graduate named above. Please respond only to those areas you feel are appropriate.

If your company has a policy prohibiting a response that may appear to be an evaluation of an employee, please check here ☐ *and return this form in the pre-paid envelope enclosed.*

	Very Good 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Very Poor 1
1. Accepting responsibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Personal initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Willingness to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Cooperation with co-workers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Cooperation with management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Attitude toward work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Mathematical skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Technical knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Organizational ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Communication skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Problem solving skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Work quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Work quantity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Meeting the public	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Following instructions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Operation of equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. What is your *OVERALL* rating of the training received by our graduate *as it relates to the requirements of the job.*

☐5 Very good
☐4 Good
☐3 Average
☐2 Poor
☐1 Very poor

18. In your opinion, what is the job outlook *TODAY* for employees in this field?

☐5 Very good
☐4 Good
☐3 Average
☐2 Poor
☐1 Very poor

19. In your opinion, what will the job outlook be *THREE YEARS FROM NOW* for employees in this field?

☐5 Very good
☐4 Good
☐3 Average
☐2 Poor
☐1 Very poor

20. If you have suggestions for improving the skills of future employees, please enter them here.

_____
_____
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13

Thank you for assisting us in our survey. Please return this form in the pre-paid envelope as soon as possible.